



A TOPICAL REPORT

A Preliminary Socio-Economic and State Demographic Profile of the John Birch Society

by Charles Jeffrey Kraft

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POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

120 Beacon Street, Suite 202
Somerville, Massachusetts 02143
ph: 617.661.9313 fax: 617.661.0059

**A Preliminary Demographic and Socio-Economic
Analysis of the 1987 Membership
of the John Birch Society**

INTRODUCTION

With a nationwide membership and a well organized political infra-structure, the John Birch Society (JBS) is one of the best known extremist groups in the United States. Its position on the far right of the political spectrum has allowed it to serve as a symbiotic link between more mainstream conservatives and the "hate" right. Leading figures in the virulently anti-semitic and racist Liberty Lobby, such as Willis Carto and Revilo P. Oliver, had been previously involved in the Birch Society. However, Oliver grew frustrated and increasingly radical after Barry Goldwater's electoral defeat in 1964.¹ Others, like Tom Metzger, a neo-nazi leader and "skin head" organizer², John Grandbouche, a militant tax protest leader, Robert Depugh, founder of the Minutemen, and Bob Mathews, the deceased leader of the terrorist, white-supremacist organization, the Order,³ also trace part of their political origins to the John Birch Society.

Because of these links to the "hate right," understanding the demographic and socio-economic composition of the JBS's membership may shed light across a wide band of paranoid, extremist organizations and can contribute to a greater understanding of the extremist's profile. The prime goal of this paper is to perform two separate socio-economic and demographic

analyses of the JBS's membership, using the Society's December 1987 membership mailing list. The first set of analysis correlates a random sampling of JBS members' zip codes with socio-economic census data. The second part will provide a state-level breakdown of membership in the John Birch Society, and will examine the correlation between state population growth and per capita state membership in the JBS. This is the first study, to be conducted with access to the entire Birch membership population, thereby allowing reliable generalizations to be made about the socio-economic and demographic composition of the society. In a previous study, Stone (1974) explained:

"The [John Birch] Society does not release its membership lists, and other efforts to identify Birchers are blocked by both the organization and the members themselves. Most members are unwilling to be interviewed, preferring to defer to their leaders as the group's spokesmen. The organization [believes]... that membership needs and desires protection."*

The paper will be presented in several sections. The first section is the introduction. As a supplement to the introduction, a brief history and description of the society will be given. In the second section, JBS members' socio-economic status will be presented. Within this context, previous theoretical and empirical literature will be briefly reviewed. Then the methodology of the current research will be given. Finally, results of the study will be presented and interpreted. At the end of this section, data sampled from the mailing list, on JBS members' titular self-identification are presented and analyzed. The third section will provide the state-wide analysis of JBS

membership. The correlation between population change and state-wide membership in the John Birch Society will be examined. This section will follow a pattern similar to the second section. Finally, the conclusion will discuss future areas for research and provide a summary of the results..

A Brief History of the John Birch Society

Before proceeding, it is important to put the John Birch Society in historical context. The John Birch Society was founded by Robert Welch, a retired candy manufacturer, on December 9, 1958 in Indianapolis. The Society's original goal was to provide a bulwark against communism both in the United States and abroad. The society was named after a young intelligence officer serving in China during the Second World War. Ten days after V-J day he was killed, allegedly by Chinese Communists, thus becoming the first casualty of the cold war.⁵

Over the years the Society's focus has shifted from purely anti-communism towards opposing what it now views as a much broader coalition, but its hallmark paranoia and conspiricism have remained constant. The Birch society believes the communists, international bankers, the Anglo-American establishment, the media, the leadership of the mainstream political parties, the Trilateralists, the Illuminati and many others are engaged in a vast, historical conspiracy of insiders determined to bring about socialist one-world government.

The society has used letter writing, protests, speeches and

other forms of activism against the civil rights movement, the ERA, the Panama Canal treaty and most recently the "internationalist" war in the Gulf. It has advocated a return to the gold standard, impeaching Earl Warren and an American withdrawal from the United Nations. Generally the JBS emphasizes its educational role. The JBS has nominally avoided direct, officially sanctioned, racist and anti-semitic eugenic statements and doctrine. However, it appeals to reactionary patriotism and paranoid nostalgia and as mentioned earlier it has often attracted overtly prejudiced people.

The JBS is hierarchically organized with a Chairman and National Council setting the agenda and policy. Historically, the National Council has often been made up of wealthy and influential individuals. In 1967 it included 14 company presidents, three physicians, and a banker⁶ and, as of 1980, the Council included three former presidents of the National Association of Manufacturers.⁷ The JBS's national headquarters maintains a full time professional staff, a publishing arm with various affiliated book stores, and it even runs summer camps for children. The Birch Society has traditionally been very secretive about its grass roots members which include home office members and local chapter members.

The peak of the Society's membership came in 1964, the year the GOP nominated Barry Goldwater, with membership then estimated to be in excess of 100,000 people.⁸ Since then it has fallen off to its current total of 21,294.⁹

A BROAD SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF BIRCH MEMBERSHIP

Status Politics and Anxiety

Previous scholarship about the socio-economic base of JBS's membership has been primarily based on a loose grouping of theories relating status anxieties to conservative political mobilization.

This section will briefly review some of the most important conceptualizations to emerge from this theoretical body and some of its criticisms. Richard Hofstadter's seminal book, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays, helped set many of the parameters around which discussion has continued to this day. Hofstadter gives an excellent definition of status politics:

We have, at all times, two kinds of processes going on in inextricable connection with each other: interest politics, the clash of material aims and needs among various groups and blocs; and status politics, the clash of various projective rationalizations arising from status politics, and other personal motives. In times of depression and economic discontent-and by and large in times of acute national emergency-politics is more clearly a matter of interests, although of course status considerations are still present. In times of prosperity and general well-being on the material plane, status considerations among the masses can become much more influential in our politics.¹⁰

Hofstadter's analysis argued that ultra-conservative, movements like the JBS drew their support from people whose status and political power in America was rapidly changing, as well as from people "who occupied discrepant statuses."¹¹ Most generally, status discrepancy refers to the violation of status expectations which typically accompany a given position in society. This

could include an individual who achieves economic success but lacks proportional educational attainment, an individual who fails to live up to his own occupational expectations, a group who perceives its status and power to be declining, or even an individual or group that perceives its social status is lagging behind its economic mobility.

According to Hofstadter the Ku Klux Klan, McCarthyism, and the JBS are all manifestations of "the tendency of status politics to be expressed more in vindictiveness, in sour memories, in the search for scapegoats, than in realistic proposals for positive action."¹² The paranoid extremist sees the world in terms of absolute good and evil, believing that from the beginning history is directed by unseen conspiratorial cabals, making huge jumps in logical deduction. Ultra-patriotism, and apocalism are also characteristic of this style of politics.¹³

A variant of status based analysis, is that an entire class with a declining status provided the base of support for the conservative movement of the 1980's. Michael Hughey sees the "old middle classes" as a reservoir of conservatism. He defines the class standing of this group as "grounded in their possession of some sort of productive property" and believes they are strongly influenced by Protestant values.¹⁴

According to Hughey, for the past century, a series of forces have contributed to the decline of this stratum. There was a tendency toward economic centralization with more industrial and agricultural wealth concentrated in the hands of fewer owners, and

political power was expropriated by immigrant groups and minorities who had previously been excluded. Hughey saw the growing conservative dissent since the 1950's as a response to this decline.¹⁵

Generally, status anxiety is postulated to precipitate involvement in extremist conservative organizations like the JBS in a misguided attempt to redress the cause of the status grievances.

Criticisms of Status Theories

There are many critics of status anxiety theories. Jerome Himmelstein argues that the fundamental conceptualization of status theories, which views extremist conservatives as alienated, declining social deviants without moorings in mainstream society, was flawed. Status theories fail to elaborate on the links and commonalities between extremists and a wider spectrum of conservatives. He argues that status politics is:

"not a very rigorous theory at all. It did not clearly specify who would, and who would not, be attracted to right-wing movements because in practice nearly everyone could be said to suffer status anxiety or dislocation. [This theory] created a false unity out of the diversity of support that its own social-scientific literature showed that the conservative movement enjoyed."¹⁶

Status discrepancy theorists have operationalized status into quantitative rankings of individuals' status perceptions to empirically test the proposition that status inconsistency or status changes lead individuals to support right-wing movements. A general review of this empirical literature using status inconsistency as an independent variable (Wilson and Zurcher)

characterizes the findings as "quite disparate" with contradictory results from different studies.¹⁷

Common Ground and Empirical Results

However, status theorists, their critics, and the series of empirical studies have unanimously agreed on one thing: that the JBS of the 1960's was made up of disproportionately well educated and upper income people. Contradicting some of the assumptions of his own status theory, Hofstadter described the Society's membership as, among other things, well educated with upper income jobs.¹⁸ Himmelstein agreed that:

"[s]upporters of the Birch Society and other radical Right organizations in the 1960s were disproportionately affluent, well educated, and in professions or business."¹⁹

There is also evidence that race, religion and party affiliation are associated with membership in the JBS, but agreement on this has been less universal, and in any case it is beyond the narrow scope of this paper.

Of course there were other supporters of the JBS with different socio-economic backgrounds. For example, lower income, white Southerners in some areas organized around the JBS during the civil rights movement, but these supporters were considered to be only a small minority of the total membership population.

Data from three principal sets of studies help to support the hypothesis that JBS members had disproportionately upper income and education levels. The first study, by Stone, in 1968

was based on interviews with 50 members of the JBS, all from California, who were reluctantly referred to Stone by the Society's local leadership. Thus, despite assurances from the Birchers, it is not possible to confirm that the sample was random.²⁰ The results from the other two studies, by Grupp and by Levy, are taken only from the summary in Lipset and Raab's book.²¹

Before 1968, Grupp had the Birch Society itself to send out a questionnaire to a random sample of its national membership. The Birch Society controlled all aspects of the mailing to ensure that individual members' privacy was protected. The questionnaire yielded a 35 percent response rate with 650 total responses. In the other study, Levy secured the names of 91 Birch Society members who had admitted membership in newspaper editorials or had revealed their membership at JBS meetings. Levy also studied two other conservative organizations, the American Party and the Conservative Federation. He mailed out questionnaires to members of the three organizations in 1963, and 46 percent of the Birch members returned the survey.²²

Table 1
Education Levels of the John Birch Society Members²³

<u>Years of School completed</u>	<u>Percentage of Members</u>		
	Stone	Grupp	Levy
8th Grade	-	4	10
9th to 11th Grades	24	7	5
High School	24	24	19
Some College	28	33	33
College Graduate	46	30	33
NA	-	1	-
Total N	50	650	42

^aStone's study combines 8th-11th Grades

^bIn Stone's study 4 people had some graduate education, 6 had a MA or MS and 6 had PhDs.

Stone categorized the members of the JBS as "a reasonably well-educated group."²⁴ The upper status of the mid-1960's JBS members becomes even more evident when it is compared to results from a national sample of adults. Sixty-three percent of the Grupp study, 60 percent of the Levy study, and 74 percent of the Stone group had at least some college education, compared with only 22 percent of the national average at the time.²⁵ Income levels also confirmed the privileged nature of many JBS members.

Table 2
Income Levels of John Birch Society Members²⁶

Family Income	Percent of Members		
	Stone	Grupp	Levy
Under \$4,000	-	5	10
\$4,000 to \$5,999	-	9	17
\$6,000 to \$9,999	14 ^a	33	45
\$10,000 to \$14,999	38	27	7
\$15,000 and up	40 ^b	22	17
NA	8	5	4
Total N	50	650	42

^aNo respondents lower than \$8,000-\$8,999

^bOf the total 40 percent, 14 percent had incomes greater than \$25,000

According to family income levels, the JBS was a privileged group relative to the rest of society. Forty percent of the Stone

group, 22 percent of the Grupp sample, and 17 percent of the Levy JBS members reported income levels greater than \$15,000. This contrasted with the fact that only 4 percent of the national population earned more than \$15,000 during this period. In 1964 the median family income for the population as a whole was \$6,000.²⁷ Stone reported that the median family income for her group was \$11,000.²⁸

Because of the limited sample sizes of the Levy and Stone studies and the fact that the Stone sample was all from California, there is a strong chance that they are not perfectly representative of the larger Birch population. The fact that the Levy samples all came from people who were willing to publicly identify themselves as JBS members could have a distorting effect. Also the Levy sample could have been biased by the fact that Levy relied on the Birch members to return the survey. People that are willing to return surveys are often not entirely representative of the larger population being studied. Stone herself admits that because the JBS provided her with the sample interviewees that her sample may not be random at all. "Apparently the author interviewed whoever was available on short notice rather than a carefully selected sample."²⁹

Despite its larger, nationally based, sample there were also possible biases inherent in the Grupp sample. Because Grupp relied on the JBS to process the sampling, it might not have been an unbiased, random survey. Also this study had the same flaw that the Levy study did because they both relied on the JBS

members themselves to return the surveys.

A more accurate, unbiased study needs to be done on JBS income and education levels. The data taken by this paper, outlined below, are drawn from the entire JBS population and do not rely on the cooperation of the JBS or of individual members. For this reason, the sample is demonstrably random and therefore more representative of the JBS membership than previous studies. Also, this study will update to the 1980s the income and education results found in previous studies. There has been a sizeable gap in the literature describing the socio-economic status of JBS members since the 1970s, which will be filled by this analysis.

As described in more detail later, this study uses the socio-economic variables: median family income, percent of owner occupied housing, median owner occupied housing value, and median years of schooling to classify the socio-economic status of the zip code areas where JBS members live. The expectation is that JBS members' socio-economic status will rate significantly higher on all of these indicators than the rest of the population.

The Methodology of Data Collection and Analysis

Obtaining the Mailing List

When the John Birch Society moved its national headquarters from Belmont, Massachusetts to Appleton, Wisconsin in the summer of 1989, a member of the Society's staff contacted Chip Berlet of Political Research Associates, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, informing Mr. Berlet that the JBS was discarding a large amount of

the society's literature. Mr. Berlet salvaged copies of Birch magazines and literature from the parking lot and dumpster at the Society's headquarters. Several copies of the JBS mailing list were among these materials.³⁰

This paper is based on the most recent copy obtained of these mailing lists, the 1987 mailing list labeled JMS 344. Access to the mailing list was provided by Political Research Associates. The collection of data can be broken down into two phases: the creation of a data base file of zip code entries and the subsequent merger of this zip code file with census data.

Sampling Data From the Mailing List

The mailing list actually consists of a first class postage membership list (FCPML), second class postage membership list (SCPML), and complimentary list. Only the actual members' zip codes, from the FCPML and the SCPML, are used in this study.

The mailing list was printed by zip code in numerically ascending order. The SCPML was made up of four sections of computer printouts and the FCPML consisted of one computer printout section.

There were 21,305 individual and joint spousal memberships on the mailing list. In order to achieve a sample having plus or minus 3 percent level of percision, with a 95 percent level of confidence, from the population of JBS members of around 20,000, a sample size of 1053 was required.³¹ By stratifying the sample by state, the sample size was reduced to an estimated 900 while

maintaining the same level of accuracy.

In gathering data for the research, a patterned or systematic sample, stratified by state, of 905 individual and joint spousal memberships was entered into a data base.

In stratifying the data, the number of members to be taken from each state was determined by multiplying each state's fraction of total national membership by nine-hundred. This is the state's population-weighted proportional share of data entries. Initially the first entry on each page of the mailing list was included on the sample. Then, for each state, additional entries were made at regular, patterned, intervals designed to bring the total number of entries from each state up to its population weighted proportional share of entries, out of the desired nine hundred total. Each state's FCPML was added to the end of its SCPML, making a single continuous membership list for each state with sampling dictated by the sampling pattern.

Each data entry included a code number identifying the entry's exact location on the mailing list, its corresponding five digit Zip Code, the member's listed title and/or gender, the member's state of residence, and whether the membership was in a home or local chapter.

Merging the Zip Codes with the Census Data

After this sample file of zip codes was compiled, it was merged with aggregate socio-economic data from the census Summary Tape STF 3 B. The information on this magnetic data tape was based on statistics collected during the 1980 national census.

The fact that the data from the mailing list come from 1987 and the census aggregates come from 1980 is a discrepancy. However, for the purposes of this study a perfect match is not necessary. The goal of the research is to unearth broad, general trends and the discrepancy doesn't invalidate broad findings about zip code areas relative socio-economic profiles.

Birch Member's Titular Self-Identification and Gender

As noted above, from the sample of 905 JBS mailing list entries, each entry's individual titular identification was recorded. The prime expectation is that there will be a significant representation of doctors and dentists. These are occupations with practitioners who typically identify themselves by their titles and have higher than average incomes and education levels. This survey led to some interesting results as expressed in Table 3.

Table 3

Birch Members' Titular Self-Identification and Gender³²

<u>Titles^a</u>	<u># of Occur.^b</u>	<u>% of Sample^c</u>	<u>Actual Occur.^d</u>
MR	540	60	-
MRS	265	29	-
MISS	40	4.4	-
DR M	20	2.2	-
MR & MRS	19	2.1	-
MD M	8	.88	-
REV M	3	.33	-
DR UNK	2	.22	-
UNK	2	.22	-
DR M & MRS	1	.11	-
DDS M	1	.11	-
DR F	1	.11	-
MS	1	.11	-
PASTOR M	1	.11	-
SISTER	1	.11	-
Total Male	573	64	48.7 ³³
Total Female	307	34	51.2 ³⁴
Total Family	20	2.2	-
Total UNK	3	.33	-
Total DR	24	2.65	-
Total MD	8	.88	.25 ³⁵
Total Clergy	4	.44	-
Total DDS	1	.11	.058 ³⁶
Total DR & MD	32	3.54	.25 ³⁷
Total	905	100	-

F stands for female and M stands for male.

^aSelf-identified title from mailing list entry

^bNumber of times title occurs in sample

^cPercentage of title's occurrence in sample

^dTitle's actual frequency (out of 100) of occurrence in the general population.

Several important pieces of information arise out of this table. The John Birch Society would appear to have a much stronger appeal to men than women. Fully 64 per cent of the

sample was male compared to only 48 percent of the broader American population. It is also interesting to note that out of the total female sample of 307, only one woman, .3 per cent of the female sample, identified herself as "Ms." This maybe strong evidence of female JBS members' deeply traditional values and perceptions. Also, only 2.2 percent of the sample, a fairly low incidence, consisted of joint spousal or family memberships. This is slightly surprising, given the JBS's oft purported emphasis of family values.

The high incidence of physicians and dentists fits well with the earlier expectation about their representation. In fact the JBS's historical opposition to any form of state sponsored health care may well have been calculated to appeal to health care professionals. The JBS claimed that this would lead to socialized medicine, which was equated with communism. As far back as 1965 the JBS's magazine American Opinion exclaimed that "the principal object of 'medicare' is to destroy the independence and integrity of American physicans."³⁰

This strategy of appealing to conservative physicians' fears of socialized medicine appears to have succeeded. Relative to the .25 percent incidence of physicans in the general population, a disproportionately large percent of the Birch sample, .88 percent, claimed the title MD. If the Birch members who identified themselves as "Doctor" are also included (most of whom probably are MDs) then 3.54 percent of the sampled members are physicians. This shows an enormously disproportionate

representation of physicians in the JBS. There is a similarly disproportionate occurrence of dentists and as well. This tends to reconfirm the privileged and well educated status of the JBS membership.

STATE-WIDE MEMBERSHIP ANALYZED

Gathering Data On State Totals

Because both the first class and the second class postage mailing lists are sorted by ascending five digit zip code numbers, it is relatively simple to compile state-wide membership totals from the mailing list. This information, for the entire JBS mailing list, was entered onto a data base along with state population demographic information from the census bureau. Table 4 is a summary of this information. The key to the columns is listed below.

- A - ST: State
- B - MEM/ST: Total members in the state³⁹
- C - %/MEM/ST: The percentage of total JBS members who reside in the state. Calculated by dividing column B by the total national membership of 21,294.
- D - State Pop: The state's population in 1987.⁴⁰
- E - %Change: The Percent Change in state population between 1980- 1987.⁴¹
- F - %ST/POP/MEM: The state per capita membership ratio x100. Calculated by dividing column B by column D and by multiplying by 100. Please note that the actual per capita number was multiplied by 100 to reduce the size of the decimal and, to make the chart easier to read.

Tables 5 and 6, which directly follow Table 4, provide identical information except that they are respectively ordered in descending, absolute, and per capita representation. This is done to clarify subsequent discussion.

Table 4

A ST	B MEM/ST	C %/MEM/ST	D STATE POP	E %STATE/US	F %CHANGE	G %ST/POP/MEM
AK	76	0.35691	525000	0.21569	30.70000	0.01448
AL	459	2.15554	4083000	1.67749	4.90000	0.01124
AR	148	0.69503	2388000	0.98110	4.50000	0.00620
AZ	577	2.70968	3386000	1.39113	24.60000	0.01704
CA	2648	12.43543	27663000	11.36524	16.90000	0.00957
CO	590	2.77073	3296000	1.35415	14.10000	0.01790
CT	118	0.55415	3211000	1.31923	3.30000	0.00367
DC	6	0.02818	622000	0.25555	-2.60000	0.00096
DE	20	0.09392	644000	0.26459	8.30000	0.00311
FL	1154	5.41937	12023000	4.93961	23.40000	0.00960
GA	949	4.45665	6222000	2.55629	13.90000	0.01525
HI	29	0.13619	1083000	0.44495	12.20000	0.00268
IA	311	1.46051	2834000	1.16434	-2.70000	0.01097
ID	439	2.06161	998000	0.41002	5.80000	0.04399
IL	447	2.09918	11582000	4.75842	1.40000	0.00386
IN	635	2.98206	5531000	2.27239	0.70000	0.01148
KS	210	0.98619	2476000	1.01726	4.70000	0.00848
KY	290	1.36189	3727000	1.53122	1.80000	0.00778
LA	257	1.20691	4461000	1.83279	6.10000	0.00576
MA	247	1.15995	5855000	2.40551	2.10000	0.00422
MD	159	0.74669	4535000	1.86319	7.50000	0.00351
ME	31	0.14558	1187000	0.48767	5.50000	0.00261
MI	412	1.93482	9200000	3.77979	-0.70000	0.00448
MN	553	2.59698	4246000	1.74445	4.20000	0.01302
MO	225	1.05664	5103000	2.09655	3.80000	0.00441
MS	225	1.05664	2625000	1.07847	4.10000	0.00857
MT	345	1.62017	809000	0.33237	2.90000	0.04265
NC	529	2.48427	6413000	2.63476	9.00000	0.00825
ND	214	1.00498	672000	0.27609	2.90000	0.03185
NE	421	1.97708	1594000	0.65489	1.60000	0.02641
NH	71	0.33343	1057000	0.43426	14.80000	0.00672
NJ	416	1.95360	7672000	3.15201	4.20000	0.00542
NM	139	0.65277	1500000	0.61627	15.10000	0.00927
NV	108	0.50719	1007000	0.41372	25.80000	0.01072
NY	773	3.63013	17825000	7.32334	1.50000	0.00434
OH	726	3.40941	10784000	4.43057	-0.10000	0.00673
OK	501	2.35278	3272000	1.34429	8.20000	0.01531
OR	345	1.62017	2724000	1.11915	3.40000	0.01267
PA	586	2.75195	11936000	4.90386	0.60000	0.00491
RI	17	0.07983	986000	0.40509	4.10000	0.00172
SC	289	1.35719	3425000	1.40715	9.70000	0.00844
SD	324	1.52156	709000	0.29129	2.70000	0.04570
TN	694	3.25913	4855000	1.99466	5.70000	0.01429
TX	1232	5.78567	16789000	6.89770	18.00000	0.00734
UT	516	2.42322	1680000	0.69022	15.00000	0.03071
VA	235	1.10360	5904000	2.42564	10.40000	0.00398
VT	0	0.00000	548000	0.22514	7.20000	0.00000
WA	873	4.09975	4538000	1.86442	9.80000	0.01924
WI	604	2.83648	4807000	1.97494	2.10000	0.01257
WV	23	0.10801	1897000	0.77938	-2.70000	0.00121
WY	98	0.46022	490000	0.20131	4.40000	0.02000

TOTAL U.S. FROM CENSUS: 243400000

TOTAL US BY ADDING STATE TOTALS: 243399000

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP: 21294

AVERAGE STATE MEMBERSHIP: 0.0116722964399

Table 5

Birch membership by gross total in each state

A	B	C	D	E	F	Gx100
CA	2648	12.43543	27663000	11.36524	16.90000	0.00957
TX	1232	5.78567	16789000	6.89770	18.00000	0.00734
FL	1154	5.41937	12023000	4.93961	23.40000	0.00960
GA	949	4.45665	6222000	2.55629	13.90000	0.01525
WA	873	4.09975	4538000	1.86442	9.80000	0.01924
NY	773	3.63013	17825000	7.32334	1.50000	0.00434
OH	726	3.40941	10784000	4.43057	-0.10000	0.00673
TN	694	3.25913	4855000	1.99466	5.70000	0.01429
IN	635	2.98206	5531000	2.27239	0.70000	0.01148
WI	604	2.83648	4807000	1.97494	2.10000	0.01257
CO	590	2.77073	3296000	1.35415	14.10000	0.01790
PA	586	2.75195	11936000	4.90386	0.60000	0.00491
AZ	577	2.70968	3386000	1.39113	24.60000	0.01704
MN	553	2.59698	4246000	1.74445	4.20000	0.01302
NC	529	2.48427	6413000	2.63476	9.00000	0.00825
UT	516	2.42322	1680000	0.69022	15.00000	0.03071
OK	501	2.35278	3272000	1.34429	8.20000	0.01531
AL	459	2.15554	4083000	1.67749	4.90000	0.01124
IL	447	2.09918	11582000	4.75842	1.40000	0.00386
ID	439	2.06161	998000	0.41002	5.80000	0.04399
NE	421	1.97708	1594000	0.65489	1.60000	0.02641
NJ	416	1.95360	7672000	3.15201	4.20000	0.00542
MI	412	1.93482	9200000	3.77979	-0.70000	0.00448
MT	345	1.62017	809000	0.33237	2.90000	0.04265
OR	345	1.62017	2724000	1.11915	3.40000	0.01267
SD	324	1.52156	709000	0.29129	2.70000	0.04570
IA	311	1.46051	2834000	1.16434	-2.70000	0.01097
KY	290	1.36189	3727000	1.53122	1.80000	0.00778
SC	289	1.35719	3425000	1.40715	9.70000	0.00844
LA	257	1.20691	4461000	1.83279	6.10000	0.00576
MA	247	1.15995	5855000	2.40551	2.10000	0.00422
VA	235	1.10360	5904000	2.42564	10.40000	0.00398
MO	225	1.05664	5103000	2.09655	3.80000	0.00441
MS	225	1.05664	2625000	1.07847	4.10000	0.00857
ND	214	1.00498	672000	0.27609	2.90000	0.03185
KS	210	0.98619	2476000	1.01726	4.70000	0.00848
MD	159	0.74669	4535000	1.86319	7.50000	0.00351
AR	148	0.69503	2388000	0.98110	4.50000	0.00620
NM	139	0.65277	1500000	0.61627	15.10000	0.00927
CT	118	0.55415	3211000	1.31923	3.30000	0.00367
NV	108	0.50719	1007000	0.41372	25.80000	0.01072
WY	98	0.46022	490000	0.20131	4.40000	0.02000
AK	76	0.35691	525000	0.21569	30.70000	0.01448
NH	71	0.33343	1057000	0.43426	14.80000	0.00672
ME	31	0.14558	1187000	0.48767	5.50000	0.00261
HI	29	0.13619	1083000	0.44495	12.20000	0.00268
WV	23	0.10801	1897000	0.77938	-2.70000	0.00121
DE	20	0.09392	644000	0.26459	8.30000	0.00311
RI	17	0.07983	986000	0.40509	4.10000	0.00172
DC	6	0.02818	622000	0.25555	-2.60000	0.00096
VT	0	0.00000	548000	0.22514	7.20000	0.00000

Table 6

Birch membership by state in order of per capita representation

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
SD	324	1.52156	709000	0.29129	2.70000	0.04570
ID	439	2.06161	998000	0.41002	5.80000	0.04399
MT	345	1.62017	809000	0.33237	2.90000	0.04265
ND	214	1.00498	672000	0.27609	2.90000	0.03185
UT	516	2.42322	1680000	0.69022	15.00000	0.03071
NE	421	1.97708	1594000	0.65489	1.60000	0.02641
WY	98	0.46022	490000	0.20131	4.40000	0.02000
WA	873	4.09975	4538000	1.86442	9.80000	0.01924
CO	590	2.77073	3296000	1.35415	14.10000	0.01790
AZ	577	2.70968	3386000	1.39113	24.60000	0.01704
OK	501	2.35278	3272000	1.34429	8.20000	0.01531
GA	949	4.45665	6222000	2.55629	13.90000	0.01525
AK	76	0.35691	525000	0.21569	30.70000	0.01448
TN	694	3.25913	4855000	1.99466	5.70000	0.01429
MN	553	2.59698	4246000	1.74445	4.20000	0.01302
OR	345	1.62017	2724000	1.11915	3.40000	0.01267
WI	604	2.83648	4807000	1.97494	2.10000	0.01257
IN	635	2.98206	5531000	2.27239	0.70000	0.01148
AL	459	2.15554	4083000	1.67749	4.90000	0.01124
IA	311	1.46051	2834000	1.16434	-2.70000	0.01097
NV	108	0.50719	1007000	0.41372	25.80000	0.01072
FL	1154	5.41937	12023000	4.93961	23.40000	0.00960
CA	2648	12.43543	27663000	11.36524	16.90000	0.00957
NM	139	0.65277	1500000	0.61627	15.10000	0.00927
MS	225	1.05664	2625000	1.07847	4.10000	0.00857
KS	210	0.98619	2476000	1.01726	4.70000	0.00848
SC	289	1.35719	3425000	1.40715	9.70000	0.00844
NC	529	2.48427	6413000	2.63476	9.00000	0.00825
KY	290	1.36189	3727000	1.53122	1.80000	0.00778
TX	1232	5.78567	16789000	6.89770	18.00000	0.00734
OH	726	3.40941	10784000	4.43057	-0.10000	0.00673
NH	71	0.33343	1057000	0.43426	14.80000	0.00672
AR	148	0.69503	2388000	0.98110	4.50000	0.00620
LA	257	1.20691	4461000	1.83279	6.10000	0.00576
NJ	416	1.95360	7672000	3.15201	4.20000	0.00542
PA	586	2.75195	11936000	4.90386	0.60000	0.00491
MI	412	1.93482	9200000	3.77979	-0.70000	0.00448
MO	225	1.05664	5103000	2.09655	3.80000	0.00441
NY	773	3.63013	17825000	7.32334	1.50000	0.00434
MA	247	1.15995	5855000	2.40551	2.10000	0.00422
VA	235	1.10360	5904000	2.42564	10.40000	0.00398
IL	447	2.09918	11582000	4.75842	1.40000	0.00386
CT	118	0.55415	3211000	1.31923	3.30000	0.00367
MD	159	0.74669	4535000	1.86319	7.50000	0.00351
DE	20	0.09392	644000	0.26459	8.30000	0.00311
HI	29	0.13619	1083000	0.44495	12.20000	0.00268
ME	31	0.14558	1187000	0.48767	5.50000	0.00261
RI	17	0.07983	986000	0.40509	4.10000	0.00172
WV	23	0.10801	1897000	0.77938	-2.70000	0.00121
DC	6	0.02818	622000	0.25555	-2.60000	0.00096
VT	0	0.00000	548000	0.22514	7.20000	0.00000

These tables provide a great deal of previously unknown or unconfirmed information. The un-weighted average state per capita membership in the JBS is .0001167. The average national per capita membership in the JBS is .0000875. Please note that, for the purposes of convenience, in all other references in this paper to JBS per capita membership, the figure was multiplied by 100 to reduce the number of leading zeros after the decimal point.

As shown by Table 5, California, Texas and Florida, three sun-belt states, have the highest absolute membership totals. All have been considered, historically, areas of strong JBS activity. Not suprisingly, California has a plurality of members, totaling 2648. Rounding out the top ten states, based on absolute membership: Georgia, Washington, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana, and Wisconsin have also been historically active Birch states.⁴² The only state without any members was Vermont.

State per capita membership in the JBS gives a more balanced, population weighted, basis for comparing state Birch activity, than absolute membership totals. When viewed from this perspective things look quite different, as evidenced by table 6. The ten states with the highest per capita membership in the JBS are: South Dakota, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Utah, Nebraska, Wyoming, Washington, Colorado, and Arizona. These ten states make up a massive, geographically contiguous, block in the Western Central United States, covering nearly a third of the total land area in America. However, compared to the East and West Coasts they have a lower population density and a higher proportion of

rural and semi-rural communities. It remains a distinct possibility that among certain segments of the population in these states that a vestige of the frontier mythology, which emphasizes individual freedom and self-reliance, lingers on. This mentality could contribute to these states' tendencies to support Birch activity. As Crawford explains, "The New Old West" feels alienated by the meddlesome federal government and the Eastern establishment. "To the Right [wing], the frontier is not only a symbol and a myth, but -like hated New York City- also a place."⁴³ Of these ten states with the highest per capita membership in the JBS, only Washington state was also among the top ten states in absolute membership.

Surprisingly, California's per capita membership in the JBS, which was .00957, was actually less than the unweighted average state per capita membership of .01167. In states like California and Florida with larger and more diverse populations, state-wide statistics could hide the fact that JBS membership is probably highly concentrated within limited areas of these states. For example, in California the JBS was concentrated in Southern California, particularly Orange Country, Los Angeles, and San Diego⁴⁴

The Case for Associating State Population Growth with Per Capita Birch Membership

Much theoretical and empirical evidence has linked changes in population with membership in right wing organizations. Status

based theorists like Hughey see the conservative movement of the 1980's as coming out of the decline, and subsequent migration, of the old middle classes.

"Many of these monied members of the old middle classes were now retiring to cities in the Sun Belt states and especially California, where they invested in real estate and joined with the regional bearers of their ideology."⁴⁵

Even critics of status politics theories like Himmelstein, agree that population changes have had an influence on the conservative movement.

"After World War II the South and Southwest underwent a rapid process of industrialization, urbanization and population growth. Although these changes were heavily subsidized by government spending on highways, water projects, and energy production as well as on the military and aerospace industry, they created a culture that celebrated unfettered development, free-wheeling investment, and individual enterprise - in general, un-regulated capitalism. The transformation of the Sun-Belt also created a class of nouveaux riches, extended affluence more broadly than before, and began to draw the disproportionate number of fundamentalists in the region back into the mainstream of American economic and, later, political life. In all these ways it encouraged conservative political trends in the region."⁴⁶

More theoretically, this regional transformation based on population growth can be classified as a structural strain. Structural strains refer to the existence of perceived ambiguities, deprivations, tensions, conflicts, or discrepancies that come from the disruption of a group's traditional or anticipated way of life.⁴⁷ Thus status anxiety theories can be seen as a very specific sub-category of strain theory. Marx and Wood assert that "[c]ollective behavior has often been associated with strains resulting from economic crises, war, domination, mass

migration, catastrophes and technological change."⁴⁸ The JBS can be defined as a countermovement, "a conscious, collective, organized attempt to resist or to reverse social change."⁴⁹

Elements in the conservative movement such as the JBS can be seen as a response to the structural strain of population growth. The precise profile of the individuals who react to the population shift by joining a social movement has been debated. Some theories postulate that native residents, who fear the changes brought by migration in-flows, join countermovements. Other theories suggest that the uncertainty caused by re-location could provide the impetus for recent migrants to join countermovements.

Lipset and Raab quote Grupp's study, saying that the

"twenty states whose population increased between 1950 and 1960 at a greater rate than the national average of 18.5 per cent contain 60 per cent of the Birch members, compared to 45 per cent of the United States population."⁵⁰

Lipset and Raab further argue that between 25 and 34 percent of the total national Birch membership came from California, and that other rapidly growing states such as Arizona, Florida, and Texas contribute heavily to the JBS membership pool. The fact that the JBS was underrepresented in New England and Oregon, states with low or negative population growth, is given as further evidence to support the growth-based structural strain theory.⁵¹

An important limitation to ^{the} recognition ^{of} this state-level analysis is that certain communities within states experience disproportionately high migratory flows relative to the state taken as a whole. Therefore the associated rise in conservative

backlash movements might be confined to these communities and not be fully evident in state-wide statistics. Given this important caveat, states do still have distinctive characteristics like tax policies, welfare programs, and political systems which do give them partially discrete and cohesive identities, making them an appropriate but not exclusive level for analysis.

By operationalizing structural strain as population change and operationalizing the presence of social movements as the state per capita membership in the JBS, the broad theoretical generalization that structural strains are associated with countermovements can be tested. The following section will examine the correlation between state per capita JBS membership and population change, with the expectation of a significant, positive correlation.

The Correlation

It might be useful for comparative purposes to put population growth and state Birch membership in Grupp's terms. The 18 states whose population increased between 1980 and 1987 at a greater rate than the national average of 7.4 per cent⁵² contain 49.5 per cent of the Birch members, compared to 41.5 per cent of the United States population. These figures point to only a moderate relationship between population growth and state membership and contradict the Grupp figures of 65 and 45 percent respectively.

As an alternative way of looking at the correlation, the SPSS statistical computer program was used to calculate two correlation

coefficients, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and an absolute value coefficient. The absolute value calculation treated population growth or reduction the same, measuring only the magnitude of the population change. This takes into account the tendency of any population change to create a structural strain. Correlation coefficients are a more rigorous way of measuring the association between variables. The Pearson Coefficient was .0609 and the absolute value coefficient was .0312. Both measurements showed a statistically insignificant association between state per capita Birch membership and population change. In the case of the JBS, this provides evidence disputing the theory that per capita membership is associated with population changes on a state-wide level. This further contradicts Grupp's results.

However, if the same two correlation coefficients are calculated without including South Dakota, Idaho, Montana, and North Dakota, the four geographically contiguous states with the highest per capita state membership, then a statistically significant relationship does emerge. In this case the Pearson coefficient was .3082 and the absolute value coefficient was .2874. The Pearson coefficient was statistically significant at the .05 level. This showed a moderately strong association between population growth and state per capita membership and is more in line with results from previous studies.

If population growth fails to adequately explain why states such as South Dakota, Montana, North Dakota, and Idaho, have such disproportionately high per capita memberships, other factors must

also be at work, particularly in these states. All four states had extremely low African-American populations, among the lowest percentages in the nation.⁵³ They all also had among the lowest population densities.⁵⁴ The combination of these factors with the previously mentioned frontier mentality of the region, points to the isolated, and homogeneous nature of these states. This could foster a subtle intolerance and a lack of pluralistic vision, making fertile soil for the JBS.

California, Texas, and Florida were the states with the three largest Birch memberships and were among the top ten states in terms of growth rates. The fact that all three had suprisingly low per capita memberships (See Table 6) could be more of a reflection of the localization of high growth areas within a state than a denial of the linkage between population growth and conservative countermovements. Other studies could, for example, analyze the growth rates of Birch members' zip code areas compared to national average zip code growth rates to see if there was a relationship between Birch membership and high zip code growth rates.

Birch state-wide membership data needs to be viewed in the context of other existing conservative countermovements. Data on Birch membership needs to be compared with data on other extremist political mobilization. Just because Birch membership is low in a given state doesn't prove that other instances of conservative countermovements are also absent. In fact, the Birch Society may have a higher per capita membership in local areas which lack a

single powerful mobilizing issue. These areas might develop more focused, localized countermovements, led by local elites, who are better able to understand and tap into local frustrations.

Boston's anti-busing movement was an example of this. According to Mottl, only social movements which are able to use "a single idea as an ideological lever for the mobilization of disparate constituents to preserve the status quo" can actually be considered countermovements.

With differing degrees of success the JBS has established single issue front groups to compensate for its lack of focus. But the Birch Society's lack of a single tangible issue to mobilize around could make it less competitive vis-a-vis other more focused countermovements. More empirical research should be done in this area. As more complete data on hate-crimes becomes available, more research needs to be done to ascertain whether there is an association between state-wide Birch membership and the state-wide frequency of hate crime perpetration.

Conclusion

The profile that emerges of the JBS membership is consistent with past theoretical and empirical work in terms of its disproportionately well educated and upper income status. This assertion is reinforced by the disproportionate representation of health care professionals in the JBS. The vast majority of JBS memberships are held by single, predominately male, individuals, not joint spousal or family groups.

This study also provided accurate data on state-wide JBS membership. Moderately strong evidence indicated that state population growth was one of several factors which could have influenced state per capita JBS membership. As is typical with most research, this preliminary investigation provoked as many questions as it attempted to answer. By drawing attention to this valuable and unique data source, further analysis may be encouraged.

NOTES

¹Frank P. Mintz, The Liberty Lobby and the American Right: Race, Conspiracy, and Culture, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 142, 163.

²Elinor Langer, "The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today," The Nation, July 16/23, 1990, p. 88.

³John GrandBouche, A Declaration of Financial Independence, (Spencer-Judd, publishers, 1983), p. 9.
For De pugh and Mathews see James Ridgeway, Blood in The Face: the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, Nazi Skinheads and the Rise of the New White Culture, (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991), pp. 60-62, 91.

⁴Barbara stone, "The John Birch Society: A Profile.," The Journal of Politics, Vol. 36, 1974, p. 187.

⁵The John Birch Society: Twenty-Five Years of Responsible Leadership, (Belmont: Public Relations Department of The John Birch Society, 1982), p. 1.

⁶David H. Bennett, The Party of Fear, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 322.

⁷The Michigan Education Association, The New Right, The Michigan Education Association, 1980), p. 28-29.

⁸Todd Barrett, "Once a Red, Always a Red: For Birchers, No Peace," Newsweek, September 17, 1990, p. 36.

⁹Taken from the John Birch Society's 1987 Mailing list, JMS 344, available at Political Research Associates.
This number only includes members residing in the U.S. There were 58 members who resided abroad from the following countries: Canada 23, Australia 5, Virgin Islands 5, Mexico 3, West Germany 3, Holland 2, Belgium 2, Switzerland 2, Isreal 2, South Africa 2, Honduras 1, Ireland 1, Republic of Korea 1, Spain 1, Monaco 1, and Saudi Arabia 1. For the purposes of this study, Puerto Rico's 2 members were not considered part of the United States' membership pool.

¹⁰Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1965), p. 53.

¹¹Jerome L. Himmelstein, To The Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 73.

¹²Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics, pp. 53, 54.

¹³Thomas J. McIntyre, The Fear Brokers, (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), pp. 156-166.

¹⁴Michael W. Hughey, "The New Conservatism: Political Ideology and Class Structure in America," Social Research, August 1982, p. 794.

¹⁵Hughey, "The New Conservatism," p. 795, 798, 799.

¹⁶Himmelstein, To The Right, p. 73, 74.

¹⁷Clarence Y. H. Lo, "Counter-movements and Conservative Movements in the Contemporary U.S.," Annual Review of Sociology, Vol 8, 1982, p.109,110.

¹⁸Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style..., p. 71.

¹⁹Himmelstein, To The Right, p. 75.

²⁰Barbara Stone, "The John Birch Society: A Profile," p. 189.

²¹Lipset and Raab, Politics of Unreason, p. 298, 299.

²²Lipset and Raab, Politics of Unreason, p. 293, 294.

²³Lipset and Raab, Politics of Unreason, p. 298, 299 and Stone, "A Profile of the John Birch Society, p. 189.

²⁴Stone, "A profile of the John Birch Society," p. 188.

²⁵Lipset and Raab, Politics of Unreason, p. 296.

26Lipset and Raab, Politics of Unreason, pp. 298, 299 and Stone, "A profile of the John Birch Society," p. 190.

27Lipset and Raab, The Politics of Unreason, p. 295.

28Stone, "A Profile of the John Birch Society," p. 190.

29Stone, "A Profile of the John Birch Society," p. 187.

30Chip Berlet, "Trashing the Birchers: Secrets of the Paranoid Right," The Boston Phoenix, July 14-20, 1989, p. 10, 23 and from personal interview with Chip Berlet.

31Taro Yamane, Elementary Sampling Theory, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall 1967), p. 398.

32Compiled From The John Birch Society's 1987 Mailing List.

33U.S. Bureau of the Censu, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1989 (109th edition.) Washington, DC, 1989, p. 13.

34IBID

35U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1990 (110th edition.) Washington, DC, 1990, p. 101.

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38J. Allen Broyles, The John Birch Society: Anatomy of a Protest, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 156.

39Taken from The John Birch Society's 1987 mailing list.

40U.S. Bureau of the Census (108th edition.), 1988, p. 21.

⁴¹IBID, p. 18.

⁴²For an excellent survey of Birch state membership in the mid-60' see Benjamin R. Epstein, and Arnold Forster, The Radical Right: Report on the John Birch Society and Its Allies. (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 195-203.

⁴³Alan Crawford, Thunder On the Right: The New Right and the Politics of Resentment, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 81, 91.

⁴⁴Michael W. Miles, The Odyssey of the American Right, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 250 and see also Epstein and Forster, The Radical Right pp. 196-197.

⁴⁵Hughey, "The New Conservatism," p. 802.

⁴⁶Himmelman, "To the Right," p. 75.

⁴⁷Gary T. Marx and James L. Wood, Strands of Theory and Research in Collective Behavior, " Annual Review of Sociology, Vol 1, 1975, pp. 375, 376.

⁴⁸Marx and Wood, "Strands of Theory...", pp. 376.

⁴⁹Tahil. Mottl, "The Analysis of Countermovements," Social Problems, Vol 27, June 1980, p. 620.

⁵⁰Lipset and Raab, "The Politics of Ureason," p. 305.

⁵¹Lipset and Raab, "The Politics of Unreason," p. 305.

⁵²U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1988, (108th edition) Washington, DC, 1988, p. 23.

⁵³U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1989, (109th edition.) Washington, DC, 1989, p. 23.

64IBID, p. 19.

65Mottl, "The Analysis of Countermovements," p. 621.

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